



October 22, 2024

Headlining This Week's Brief

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Top Stories

Hurricane Oscar Makes Landfall in Cuba Sunday, Significant Flood Risk Continues

After quickly developing from an unnamed disturbance to a hurricane in less than 24 hours on Saturday, Oscar tracked across Turks and Caicos and the southeastern Bahamas before making [landfall](#) over northeastern Cuba near Baracoa as an 80mph hurricane Sunday evening. Compounding matters: Cuba is dealing with an energy crisis that triggered a nationwide blackout on Friday. While Oscar's compact size has kept impacts confined to eastern Cuba, [preliminary damage assessments](#) reveal homes and buildings without roofs, fallen trees, and damaged agriculture. The full scope of the damage will become clearer later Monday as crews survey the region.

Oscar has since weakened to a Tropical Storm due to land interaction, but the threat of potentially life-threatening impacts is not over. Still centered over eastern Cuba, [Tropical Storm Oscar](#) will be slow-moving through Monday night, leading to localized rainfall totals in excess of eight to 12 inches. The extremely heavy rain will create a significant risk for dangerous flash flooding and landslides that may lead to localized evacuations. By Tuesday, upper-level winds will force Oscar to take a sharp northeast turn back over the Bahamas. Tropical Storm Warnings remain in effect for southeastern portions of the Bahamas, where additional flash flooding, tropical-storm-force winds, and storm surge are all possible.

Israel Battles on in Lebanon, Gaza Following Death of Hamas Chief

Israel's military [announced](#) it is targeting Hezbollah's financial arm, al-Qard al-Hassan, in a new wave of strikes across Beirut, the eastern Bekaa Valley, and southern Lebanon. Explosions were reported in Beirut's southern suburbs shortly after the announcement, with evacuation warnings issued for multiple

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ar eas. The strikes follow U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's [call](#) for Israel to reduce civilian casualties, especially in Beirut, as the conflict with Hezbollah continues.

The attacks come as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken [begins](#) another swing through the Middle East on Monday to discuss ceasefire conditions, among other topics. Israel has given the White House its conditions for a ceasefire with Hezbollah, according to a report from [Axios](#). They reportedly include that the IDF be allowed to continue to operate in areas of southern Lebanon near its border and that its air force have freedom of operation in Lebanese airspace. It's unlikely that Lebanon would agree to such conditions since they would compromise the country's sovereignty and go against United Nations Resolution 1701. Meanwhile, UNIFIL has [accused](#) Israel of demolishing a watchtower as the IDF reiterates its demand that the U.N. peacekeeping forces withdraw.

The chances for a ceasefire in Gaza are not much better. Officials in the U.S. and elsewhere had been [hopeful](#) that the death of Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar, who was killed during fighting with the Israel Defense Forces in Gaza last week, would create an opening for a deal. Still, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Hamas have both [vowed](#) to fight on. Israel is continuing to press into northern Gaza, [reportedly](#) besieging hospitals and shelters as they conduct operations targeting "terrorists and terrorist infrastructure" in the Jabalia area.

Hanging over the fighting in both Gaza and Lebanon is how Israel intends to retaliate against Iran for its missile barrage on October 1. The U.S. is [investigating](#) a leak of its intelligence that details Israel's plans to strike Iran. American officials [claim](#) that Netanyahu has said Israel will restrict its strikes to military targets. An attack on Iran's nuclear or oil facilities would significantly escalate tensions.

Harris, Trump Begin Campaign Blitz as Early Voting Kicks Off in Some States

Campaign events are in full swing this week as Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump embark on another tour of battleground states. Harris is wrapping up [visits](#) today in Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, with further rallies expected to be announced in the coming days. Harris is also [scheduled](#) to rally alongside former President Barack Obama on Thursday and former first lady Michelle Obama on Friday in Georgia. Trump is concluding a rally in Greenville, NC, and will be presiding over an event in Concord, NC, later this evening. This week, he is scheduled to make other stops in Greensboro, NC, Duluth, GA, Zebulon, GA, and Las Vegas, NV.

Early voting is [underway](#) in some states as last-minute rule changes and other voting developments are unfolding. Last Tuesday, a judge [blocked](#) a set of rules proposed by Georgia's State Election Board, [including](#) a measure requiring ballots to be hand-counted only after the polls close and two other certification-related rules. In Florida, Governor Ron DeSantis [approved](#) alterations to election procedures for counties recovering from the recent hurricanes. Lastly, the Justice Department [sued](#) Virginia election

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officials last week, accusing them of violating a rule that requires states to conclude the removal of ineligible voters from voter rolls 90 days before the election and of eliminating U.S. citizens from voter lists amid the state's attempts to address alleged "noncitizen voting."

Climate and Natural Hazards

- **Roswell, New Mexico Reeling After Severe Flooding:** A rare [flash flood emergency](#) was issued over the weekend as Roswell received a record-breaking [5.78 inches of rain](#) in a single day. [Two people were killed](#), and nearly [300 were rescued](#), with 38 of those needing to be taken to local hospitals for treatment. All roads [into and out of](#) Roswell were closed Saturday night. Several roads remained shut down on Monday morning. Flights Monday morning at the [Roswell Air Center](#) are canceled. Drier weather is expected over the next seven days.
- **Tropical Depression Kristine to Strengthen as it Approaches the Philippines:** Located a few hundred miles east of the Philippines as of late Monday local time, [Tropical Depression 22W](#), designated as 'Kristine' by [PAGASA](#), is large and disorganized. While the center is still far away, outer rain bands are already beginning to pose a [flash flood threat](#) across eastern portions of the Philippines. Intensification, possibly into a typhoon, appears likely before a potential landfall over northeastern Luzon around October 23-25. Those with interests in the area should keep a close eye on forecast trends, as Kristine may produce extremely heavy rain, typhoon-force winds, and dangerous storm surges.
- **Monitoring the Bay of Bengal for Tropical Development:** As of Monday evening, local time, regional [satellite](#) data reveals a broad area of scattered showers and thunderstorms over the eastern Bay of Bengal. This feature is expected to take advantage of a favorable environment for intensification and strengthen into a named tropical cyclone between October 22 and 23. A general north-northwestern track is probable, with landfall likely somewhere along the northwestern Bay coast between October 24 and 25. All interests from Andhra Pradesh northward into Bangladesh and Tripura should closely monitor the progress of this feature.
- **Storm Ashley Leaves Thousands Without Power in Ireland:** [Storm Ashley](#) delivered wind gusts of 70- 80mph to western Ireland, Northern Ireland, and western Scotland this weekend, knocking out power to over [50,000 customers](#) and leading to widespread delays for air and rail services. As of midday Monday, [ESB Networks](#) has stated that about 8,500 customers remain without electricity in Ireland. Transportation services are normalizing as well, with weather conditions forecast to improve through Tuesday as the storm exits the region.

Worldwide

- **Rising Tensions on the Korean Peninsula After North and South Trade Threats:** Last week, following an accusation that South Korea flew drones into its airspace, North Korea conducted a [choreographed demolition](#) of several roads and railways built to connect the two countries.

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South Korea responded by firing warning shots in the vicinity of the border. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has called for unification to be dropped as a national goal, and the North Korean national assembly has declared South Korea a [hostile state](#). It is reporting a surge in applications to [join the military](#).

- **Diplomatic Issues Between Canada, India Threaten Trade Relations:** After investigating the potential involvement of [India's top diplomatic representative](#) in the death of a Sikh activist, Canada officially expelled them along with five others. India has denied any involvement and has responded by expelling Canada's representative in India and five additional diplomats. The situation has led to the suspension of talks on a [bilateral trade deal](#) between the countries and sparked concerns over potential impacts on immigration and travel between them.
- **Civil Unrest in Bolivia Amid Potential Criminal Charges Against Former President:** Current Bolivian President Luis Arce is [pursuing criminal charges](#) against former president Evo Morales, the latest development in a political feud that has led to widespread demonstrations. In recent days, supporters of both politicians have blocked roads and clashed in the streets, leading to multiple arrests and at least one injured police officer. [No arrest warrant](#) for Morales has been issued; however, police have stated they will arrest him if one is received. Both men belong to the same political party and seek the party's nomination in the 2025 presidential election.
- **Italian Parliament Passes Law Expanding Ban on Surrogacy Tourism:** The upper house of the Italian parliament passed a [new anti-surrogacy law](#) expanding the ban on Italian citizens from traveling internationally to find surrogate mothers. The law increases fines up to one million euros and two years in jail. It includes penalties for Italian medical professionals who work in foreign fertility clinics that support surrogacies. Opponents of the law believe it unfairly targets same-sex couples. The law follows an [edict issued last year](#) barring Italian cities from registering birth certificates to parents of the same sex.
- **EU Candidates Moldova, Georgia Face Pivotal Elections:** Moldova's incumbent President Maia Sandu and former prosecutor general Alexandr Stoianoglo are heading for a runoff presidential vote after neither candidate received an outright majority in Sunday's election. According to preliminary results, a concurrent referendum on enshrining European Union membership in the country's constitution narrowly passed. An EU spokesperson [noted](#) the passage came despite "unprecedented interference and intimidation by Russia and its proxies" during the election, including allegations of vote buying and disinformation. Across the Black Sea, Georgian voters will elect its next parliament this weekend. Both elections come amid heightened tensions over the countries' plans for accession to the European Union and their relationship with Russia. Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili is [dubbing](#) her country's election a "referendum" between Russia and Europe.

Cyber and Regulatory

- **China, Iran, Russia Increasing Utilization of Cybercriminals:** The Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) released an [advisory](#) warning about Iranian criminal networks targeting critical infrastructure in the U.S., Canada, and Australia. The brute force attacks utilize “MFA push bombing” to steal passwords to publish on cybercriminal forums and to burrow further into target systems. This advisory follows Microsoft’s digital threats report, which [highlights](#) China, Russia, and Iran’s growing use of cybercriminals to disrupt or embarrass rival governments. The partnership offers new avenues of financial gain and state protection for hackers, while governments can increase cyber operations with little investment.
- **U.K. Fears Chinese Intrusion in Critical Infrastructure:** U.K. officials have revealed that China has likely [infiltrated](#) the country’s critical infrastructure over the past several years. Officials named several Chinese-affiliated hacking groups, including Volt Typhoon, that may have established themselves within critical networks to conduct a future attack “in the event of a conflict or crisis.” Other attacks blamed on China include accessing the armed forces personnel data in May and numerous attempts to access senior politicians’ personal communications. The U.K. hopes to pass a Cyber Security and Resilience Bill next year to secure the country’s critical infrastructure and online services.
- **FTC Finalizes “Click-to-Cancel” Rule:** The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has introduced a [final rule](#) requiring businesses to make canceling subscriptions as easy as signing up. The rule [applies](#) to online and in-person signups, mandating that companies offer simple cancellation options and disclose clear terms before billing consumers. Entities will have about six months to come into compliance; those that don’t could be exposed to civil penalties. The FTC said it receives about 70 daily complaints on average about difficult cancellations or unclear subscription terms, a 60% increase compared to 2021.
- **EU Member States Lag on Cybersecurity Directive:** The European Union’s [NIS 2 directive](#), aimed at strengthening cybersecurity across key sectors, officially became enforceable last week, but many EU member states [have yet to adopt the rules](#). The directive requires businesses in sectors like energy, transport, and banking to bolster cyber defenses and report breaches within 24 hours; however, the spotty implementation at the state level across the bloc has companies operating there [concerned](#) about compliance and enforcement, as failure to comply with the new regulations could result in significant fines. Legal experts have outlined a [compliance checklist](#) for companies impacted by the legislation.
- **Kroger’s Technology Plans Face Lawmaker Scrutiny:** Kroger’s [reported](#) plan to use facial recognition technology alongside dynamic pricing in its stores is facing increased scrutiny from lawmakers amid its contentious merger with Albertsons. In a letter posted last week, Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib [warned](#) that the technology could lead to discriminatory pricing and allow Kroger to build customer profiles to determine the maximum price individuals are

willing to pay. She joined Senators Elizabeth Warren and Bob Casey, who [wrote](#) similar notes to those of Kroger's CEO in August. In response to the concern, Kroger said it does not engage in "surge pricing" and "any test of its electronic shelf tags is designed to lower prices."

Infrastructure and Supply Chain

- **Blackouts and Internet Outages Rock Chad, Cuba, Nigeria:** Cuba's electrical grid [collapsed](#) for the fourth time in 48 hours on Sunday, coinciding with the arrival of Hurricane Oscar, further exacerbating the island's infrastructure crisis. The storm and severe shortages of food, medicine, and fuel pose significant challenges to restoring full service. Last week, many Nigerians were also left without power for several days after the nation's power grid [collapsed](#) three times in one week. Meanwhile, neighboring Chad [experienced](#) a nationwide internet outage linked to broken fiber-optic cables, which brought many businesses, schools, and government institutions' operations to a standstill.
- **Canada Cuts Reverses Course on Immigration, Slashing Quotas and Lowering Visas:** During the Coronavirus pandemic, the Canadian government promoted immigration to fill a labor shortage. Now, policymakers are [reversing course](#) amid allegations that mass immigration is straining resources. This year, the government introduced stricter measures, slashing immigration quotas, issuing fewer student visas, and setting limits on how many foreign workers a company can employ. With tighter measures in place, the 2.2 million immigrants with temporary status are facing the possibility of being forced to leave Canada, as well as a worsening public mood towards them. The government is expected to introduce further measures next month.
- **U.S. Infrastructure and Supply Chains Impacted by Severe Weather:** President Biden [announced](#) that funds from the Small Business Administration's (SBA) disaster loan program were depleted last week. In states like Florida, property insurance companies are [reevaluating](#) the viability of continuing operations in disaster-prone areas. Early assessments estimate that Hurricane Milton and Helene caused over \$200 billion in economic losses. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently [warned](#) healthcare facilities of a shortage of peritoneal dialysis (PD) and intravenous (IV) treatments after the storms impacted the largest manufacturer of PD and IV treatments based in North Carolina. The devastation also has [implications](#) for the semiconductor industry, as North Carolinian producers of the world's purest quartz—a critical component for semiconductor chips—were forced to suspend operations.
- **European Authorities Say Nearly Two-Thirds of Continent's Water in Poor Condition:** In a [report](#) published last week, the European Environment Agency (EEA) stated that almost two-thirds of the European Union's bodies of water are in "bad condition." Additionally, the report states that water scarcity affects a third of the EU's population and a fifth of its land, an issue exacerbated by "excessive pollution," mostly driven by agriculture and industry. Europe, currently

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the fastest warming continent, has faced increased stress on its water supply, with authorities shelling out billions of dollars to deal with fires and floods and major European cities [declaring](#) drought emergencies in recent years. Environmental authorities anticipate extreme drought conditions will worsen in the future.

- **Tech Companies Turn to Nuclear Power to Fuel Booming AI Data Centers:** In response to soaring energy demands to power artificial intelligence (AI) data centers, tech giants are increasingly looking to nuclear power. Last week, Google [signed](#) a deal with Kairos Power to develop small modular reactors to help power data centers. Amazon and Microsoft have also recently made deals with companies that build nuclear plants. Microsoft [intends to buy](#) power from the [reopening](#) Three Mile Island plant in Pennsylvania, the site of the U.S.'s worst reactor accident in history. EU ministers [agreed](#) to support the push for nuclear energy ahead of next month's COP29 summit, acknowledging that the cleaner, more efficient energy solution may help mitigate climate change effects.

Health

- **Zimbabwe and Zambia Report Mpox Cases, Vaccine Campaign in DRC Faces Hurdles:** Zimbabwe [reported](#) its first two cases of mpox last week, although health officials have yet to specify whether the patients are [infected](#) with the more concerning "clade 1b" variant. The variant of [Zambia's first case](#) is also still unclear. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the outbreak's epicenter, health officials [warn](#) that the ongoing vaccination drive will take longer than initially planned, with a significant hurdle being promotion and educational outreach. The World Health Organization released an [interim operational guide](#) about preventing and caring for mpox patients for healthcare providers in resource- limited settings.
- **Marburg Outbreak Slows in Rwanda Amid Heightened Prevention Measures:** Health officials in Rwanda [reported](#) no new case detections of the Ebola-like illness in recent days, signaling a favorable trend in the country's first Marburg outbreak. As of this Sunday, Rwandan health officials had [confirmed](#) 62 cases and 15 deaths from the disease, up from 61 and 14 respectively the previous week. According to the [latest situation report](#) from the World Health Organization, the outbreak in Rwanda is the third largest on record. Health workers from two Kigali facilities have accounted for most confirmed cases.
- **CDC Reports Increase of Walking Pneumonia Cases in Young Children:** According to the CDC, [bacterial respiratory infections](#) from *M. pneumoniae* have been high since late spring, notably affecting younger children, ages two to four, than in previous years. *M. pneumoniae* infections are common and are often referred to as "[walking pneumonia](#)," as symptoms appear milder than typical pneumonia infections. The rise in cases among younger children is significant, as *M. pneumoniae* has not traditionally been seen as a major cause of pneumonia in this age group. *M.*

pneumoniae spreads through respiratory droplets in close-contact settings, such as schools and households.

- **Flooding-Related Illness Risks Rise Following Hurricanes:** Public health risks in hurricane-hit areas emerge weeks after flood waters receded. In Florida, cases of *Vibrio vulnificus*, which can lead to severe wound infections, are **increasing**. Two of the worst-hit counties, Hillsborough and Pinellas, have reported 20 confirmed cases since late September, and cases in Florida have **doubled** since hurricanes Helene and Milton hit. Florida health officials are **advising** people to stay out of floodwaters, as contact with contaminated water is how the bacteria spreads, and an ensuing infection can be potentially fatal. In North Carolina, where there is a lack of access to potable drinking water, health officials are **recommending** that residents wash hands and surfaces that have encountered floodwater.
- **CDC Issues Interim Recommendations to Prevent Possible Sexual Spread of Oropouche:** Some scientists are concerned that Oropouche virus could be sexually transmitted after the virus was **detected** in the semen of one patient days after infection. Oropouche typically spreads through the bite of infected midges, and no cases of transmission through sexual activity have been reported. As a precaution, the CDC now advises men diagnosed with Oropouche to use condoms or abstain from sex for at least six weeks and refrain from donating semen. In other Oropouche news, a recent study in *The Lancet* on cases in Brazil **found** that genetic reassortment, or when a virus' genetic material gets mixed, is likely contributing to the recent spread of the virus in South America's largest country.

Demonstrations and Industrial Action

- **Opposing Demonstrations in Central London to Draw Large Crowds:** On Saturday, October 26, far-right activist Tommy Robinson is planning to lead a march from Victoria Station to 10 Downing St at 11 am. In response, several labor and civil society groups, including Stand Up to Racism, are organizing an opposing demonstration at Piccadilly beginning at 11:30 am. Robinson held a **similar event** in July that attracted thousands of supporters, a significant police presence, and counterdemonstrators. Saturday's demonstration comes after widespread rioting following the **Southport knife attack** and weeks of counterdemonstrations organized by Stand Up to Racism and its local chapters.
- **Climate Activists Plan Week of Action Targeting Insurance Companies in U.K.:** Extinction Rebellion is organizing a U.K.-wide week of action beginning October 28, targeting insurance companies that work with firms involved in the extraction of fossil fuels. The group has outlined several direct actions they plan to take during the week, including a march in London on Monday, October 28, to "visit" some of the insurers. While exact locations for the events haven't been announced, organizers have listed the Tower Hill Tube station as the closest to many planned demonstrations. Actions are also planned in Glasgow, Sheffield, Manchester, Banbury, Birmingham, and elsewhere.

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- **Peru Braces for National Strike on Wednesday:** More than 200 labor unions have [announced](#) their intention to take part in a national strike on Wednesday, October 23. Along with the strike, organizers are planning a large march in Lima to the Congress of the Republic starting at 10 am to demand that the government do more to address rising insecurity in the country. Should the government refuse, they have threatened to continue the strike for up to 72 hours. The national strike will be [preceded](#) by demonstrations in Trujillo and other cities in the north of the country. The demonstrations come as Lima and Callao are contending with high levels of extortion, triggering a state of emergency in the capital.
- **Boeing Machinists to Vote on New Deal to End Weeks-Long Strike:** More than 30,000 Boeing machinists who have been on strike since September 13 will vote on a [new contract proposal](#) to increase their wages by 35% over four years. The deal also includes a signing bonus of \$7,000, guaranteed minimum payouts in an annual bonus program, and greater 401(k) contributions. However, it does not include the reintroduction of a defined-benefit pension plan, a key request by the striking workers. Members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers will [vote](#) on the deal on Wednesday.
- **Doctors in India Call Off Strike as Those in South Threaten Additional Action:** Junior doctors in West Bengal, India, [called off](#) their strike after meeting with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee earlier today. The doctors had met with Banerjee to [discuss](#) several of their demands, including increased security at medical facilities, the removal of Health Secretary NS Nigam, and justice for their colleague, who was raped and murdered while on shift at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata. Several of them had been on a fast-unto-death since October 5. Separately, junior doctors in South Korea who have been on strike since February may soon be joined by unionized workers at Seoul National University (SNU) Hospital. SNU employees are planning an [indefinite strike](#) beginning October 31 to protest health care reforms and poor working conditions.

Upcoming Events

- October 21-26: IMF and World Bank Annual Meetings (Washington D.C.)
- October 21-26: Commonwealth Summit (Apia, Samoa)
- October 21 – November 1: United Nations Biodiversity Conference (Cali, Colombia)
- October 22-24: BRICS Summit (Kazan, Russia)
- October 25: Republic Day (Kazakhstan)
- October 26: Parliamentary Elections (Georgia)
- October 26: National Day (Austria)

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- October 27: General Election (Japan)
- October 27: Parliamentary Election (Bulgaria)
- October 27: Parliamentary Election (Uzbekistan)
- October 27: General Election (Uruguay)
- October 27: Municipal Elections, Second Round (Brazil)